

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 11645 190016Z

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ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 11645

USIAC

FOR IBS, IEA

E.O. 11652: GDS: 12/31/81

SUBJECT: MENTIONS OF RADIO FREE ASIA IN THAI PRESS

1. TWO BANGKOK THAI-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS HAVE MENTIONED RADIO FREE ASIA (TEAK) TWICE IN RECENT DAYS, CLAIMING THAT MFA-PRODUCED PROGRAMS NEED BETTER ALLOCATION OF BROADCAST TIMES. WHILE VOA NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN PRESS ITEMS, INFERENCE CLEAR THAT THEY BELIEVE THERE IS UNEQUITABLE BROADCAST TIME DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN VOA AND RFA, AND THAT RFA SHOULD BE GIVEN BROADCAST SLOTS AT PEAK EVENING LISTENING HOURS.

2. AS AGENCY IS AWARE, THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN RAISED INFORMALLY ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS IN THE PAST THREE YEARS BY MFA OFFICIALS DIRECTING RADIO FREE ASIA OPERATIONS, BUT THIS IS FIRST PRESS MENTION POST OFFICERS CAN RECALL ON THIS SUBJECT.

3. BRS MANAGER HILLGARDNER ON JUNE 12 CALLED ON CHAIYA CHINDAWONGSE AT RADIO FREE ASIA'S OFFICES. CHAIYA IS RECENTLY-NAMED MFA OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR RFA OPERATIONS. DURING MEETING, PRESS ITEMS WERE DISCUSSED AND CHAIYA CLAIMED  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 11645 190016Z

HE WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR INSPIRING EITHER ARTICLE.

HE SAID THE RFA OPERATION WAS UNDER DISCUSSION DURING THE BUDGET PREPARATIONS PROCESS, AND INDICATED THAT THE TEAK AGREEMENT IS ONE OF THE MANY US-THAILAND ARRANGEMENTS THAT ARE CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW BY THE RTG COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY AMBASSADOR TO THE US ANAND PANYARACHUN.

4. CHAIYA REPEATED MFA INTEREST IN INCREASING RFA BROADCAST AUDIENCES BY GAINING NIGHTTIME HOURS WHICH ARE NOW WITHIN VOA TIME BLOCK. MFA SEES THIS OPTION AS THE CHEAPEST WAY TO GAIN LISTENERSHIP. RFA DOES NOT USE EARLY MORNING BLOCK ASSIGNED TO IT BECAUSE IT WOULD NECESSITATE EXTRA COST FOR AN ADDITIONAL STAFF WORK SHIFT.

5. HILLGARTNER REITERATED THAT HE DID NOT HAVE AUTHORITY TO CHANGE TIME SLOT ARRANGEMENTS NEGOTIATED AND SIGNED IN TEAK AGREEMENT. HE TOLD CHAIYA THAT SUCH A REQUEST FOR CHANGES MUST BE SUBMITTED OFFICIALLY TO THE US EMBASSY BEFORE ANY CONSIDERATION FOR CHANGE CAN BE MADE. HILLGARTNER FEELS THAT AFTER THREE YEARS OF INFORMAL REQUESTS, THE MFA LIKELY TO SUBMIT FORMAL REQUEST FOR NIGHTTIME HOURS.

6. PRIOR TO PRESS TIEMS BUT IN RESPONSE TO RECENT WAVE OF ANTI-US CLIMATE BRS MANAGER WITH CONCURRENCE OF POST TOOK SOME PRUDENT STEPS TO REDUCE VISIBILITY OF RELAY STATION OPERATION. THESE INCLUDED: (A) REPLACING VOA SIGNS AT BOTH SITES WITH THAI LANGUAGE ONES IDENTIFYING FACILITIES AS BELONGING TO RTG, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS; (B) TELEPHONE OPERATOR NOW RESPONDS TO INCOMING CALLS STATING "RADIO FREE ASIA" INSTEAD OF VOA AS PREVIOUS PRACTICE; (C) VOA MARKINGS ON BRS VEHICLES REMOVED.

7. ENGLISH ANNOUNCEMENTS PRECEDING AND DURING VOA TIME BLOC IDENTIFYING STATION AS RADIO FREE ASIA CARRYING VOA BROADCASTS BEING DROPPED SINCE SAME ANNOUNCEMENT MADE IN THAI. HOWEVER, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANNOUNCEMENT IDENTIFYING SEQUENCE OF EACH VOA PROGRAM RETAINED THROUGHOUT.

8. TEXTS OF ARTICLES CITED FOLLOW:

9. (BEGIN CHAO THAI TEXT) IN AGREEMENT REACHED IN REGARD TO CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 11645 190016Z

BROADCAST NEWS OVER RADIO FREE ASIA, NEWS BROADCASTS OF RADIO THAILAND ARE RELAYED FROM 8:00 PM TO 8:30 PM. BUT LISTENERS HAVE TO TUNE IN SOME OTHER STATION TO HEAR THE NEWS VERY OFTEN AND MOST OF THE TIME, THOUGH THE NEWS PROGRAM IS NOT ENDED YET. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INCURS EXPEDITURE FOR THE COST OF ELECTRICITY FOR THE RELAY OF NEWS OR PROGRAMS BROADCAST BOTH DURING THE DAYTIME, THE EVENING, AND AT NIGHT, TOTALLING SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF BAHT A MONTH.

EXPENDITURE INCURRED COULD BE REDUCED IF RELAY OF NEWS OR PROGRAMS BROADCAST IN THE DAYTIME AND IN THE EVENINGS WERE STOPPED, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE NOT MANY PEOPLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LISTEN TO THEM. NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE HELD WITH THE UNITED STATES TO EXTEND THE TIME FOR THAI BROADCASTS FROM 8 PM TO 9 PM. AFTER RELAYING NEWS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHOULD BROADCAST COMMENTS AND FOREIGN NEWS IN DETAIL, PROGRAMS WHICH WOULD PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE TO THE THAI PEOPLE AND KEEP THEM INFORMED OF THE LATEST NEWS ON THE SITUATION IN GENERAL. THIS PROGRAM COULD BE RECORDED ON TAPE IN THE EVENINGS BEFOREHAND, AND IT WOULD NOT ONLY INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE AND KEEP THEM INFORMED ON FOREIGN POLICY, BUT IT WOULD BE THRIFTY AND CONSIDERABLY REDUCE EXPENDITURE INCURRED. WE FEEL CERTAIN THAT THIS SUGGESTION TO STOP BROADCASTING PROGRAMS IN THE DAYTIME AND EVENINGS, WHICH PEOPLE HAVE NO OPPORTUNITY TO LISTEN TO, WOULD BE A MOST PRACTICAL AND BENEFICIAL PLAN (END CHAO THAI TEXT)

10. (BEGIN SIAM RATH GRAPH) ANOTHER AGREEMENT THAT MUST BE REVIEWED IS THE BROADCASTING OF NEWS OVER RADIO FREE ASIA. THE THAI GOVERNMENT INCURS EXPENDITURE OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF BAHT FOR ELECTRICITY EVERY MONTH FOR OPERATION OF THIS RADIO STATION. PROGRAMS OF OUR MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE BROADCAST DURING THE DAY, THEREFORE WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE LISTEN TO THEM, UNLIKE IN THE EVENINGS AND AT NIGHT WHEN A VERY LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE LISTEN TO RADIO BROADCASTS. (END SIAM RATH GRAPH)  
MCGINLEY

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